

**STATEMENT IN
SUPPORT OF PROBABLE CAUSE**

IN RE: Negasi Kidanemariam GEBREKRSTOS

I, Aaron Gonzalez, declare and state as follows:

On March 8, 2023, a Border Patrol Agent (BPA) was working his assigned duties at the Laredo North Border Patrol Checkpoint, located on Highway 35 at the 29 mile marker, north of Laredo, Texas in Webb County.

At approximately 8:50 p.m., a white tractor trailer approached the primary lane for an immigration inspection. The BPA noticed one visible occupant and the sleeper curtain closed. The BPA asked the driver, Negasi Kidanemariam GEBREKRSTOS "Where he was going to?" and GEBREKRSTOS responded with "Dallas." The BPA asked, "What do you have in the back today?" GEBREKRSTOS provided a response that the BPA could not understand. The BPA asked, "Where are you coming from?", again the BPA could not understand GEBREKRSTOS for speaking in a soft tone. The BPA asked multiple times "Are you by yourself today?" GEBREKRSTOS's nervous behavior led the BPA requesting consent to inspect the sleeper area. GEBREKRSTOS placed the tractor in park and scratched his head in a nervous manner and broke eye contact with the BPA.

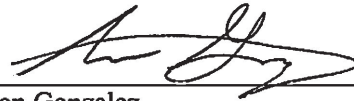
The BPA asked, "Is it ok if I look in the back?" GEBREKRSTOS responded "Okay" and looked and pointed toward the back area of the sleeper. At that time the BPA Canine Handler hand signaled the BPA to refer for a secondary inspection. The BPA made his way towards the passenger door and GEBREKRSTOS unlocked the passenger door to give access for the BPA to enter the tractor's cab. The BPA instructed GEBREKRSTOS to open the curtains to which the BPA observed a large blanket with head-like silhouettes. The BPA asked GEBREKRSTOS if he could lift the blanket. GEBREKRSTOS lifted the blanket, and the BPA observed the shoes of multiple subjects laying on the bed. An immigration inspection was conducted on the subjects, revealing the subjects were illegally present in the United States (U.S.) without proper documentation to be or remain in the U.S. legally. GEBREKRSTOS and the subjects were placed under arrest and escorted into the checkpoint for further processing.

Negasi Kidanemariam GEBREKRSTOS was read his Miranda Rights. He acknowledged receipt and understood his rights by signing Service Form I-214 and advised that he was willing to provide a statement without a lawyer present. GEBREKRSTOS stated he made a stop at approximately 6:00 p.m. at a truck stop located at the 13 mile marker on Highway 35 before heading to Dallas, TX. GEBREKRSTOS stated inside the truck stop he was approached by an unknown subject stating he needed help to transport individuals who worked in construction to Dallas, TX. GEBREKRSTOS replied with "I don't want to take the risk" and was afraid he would be involved in a vehicle accident if he would have accepted to take the subjects to Dallas, TX. GEBREKRSTOS stated the unknown subject left the area. GEBREKRSTOS went back to his tractor trailer and continued to drive north on Highway 35. GEBREKRSTOS stated he never imagined the subjects were going to be hidden behind his sleeper.

Juan Manuel SALDANA-Ventura, a national of Mexico, is serving as a material witness in the case. SALDANA-Ventura stated his friend arranged for him to be smuggled into the U.S and his destination was Dallas, TX. SALDANA-Ventura illegally crossed the Rio Grande River into Laredo, TX on March 7, 2023. After crossing the river SALDANA-Ventura was picked up by a car which took him to a house at an unknown location. SALDANA-Ventura was at that house for about a day and then was taken to another unknown house on the morning of March 8, 2023. Around 7:00 p.m. SALDANA-Ventura stated he was taken to another unknown location where a tractor trailer was waiting for them. SALDANA-Ventura stated someone inside of the tractor opened the door for him to enter and that there were already subjects inside of the tractor. SALDANA-Ventura stated that the driver then got inside the tractor and proceeded to drive for about an hour before arriving at the Border Patrol Checkpoint. SALDANA-Ventura was presented with a six-person photo lineup and was able to positively identify Negasi Kidanemariam GEBREKRSTOS as the driver.

I declare (certify, verify, or state) under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on the 9th day of March, 2023 at Laredo, Texas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Gonzalez', written over a horizontal line.

Aaron Gonzalez
Border Patrol Agent
United States Border Patrol
